

# COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT REFORM

TOM DAVIS, CHAIRMAN



## **MEDIA ADVISORY**

For Immediate Release  
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### **Is the Federal Government Prepared for a Bioterrorist Attack?**

*Committee to Evaluate Effectiveness of Project BioShield:*

*Is HHS Moving Fast Enough?*

**What: Government Reform Committee Oversight Hearing:  
“One Year Later: Evaluating the Effectiveness of Project BioShield”**

**When: THURSDAY, JULY 14, 2005 at 10:00 A.M.**

**Where: ROOM 2154, RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING**

#### **Background:**

While recent decades have yielded rapid progress in the treatment of many serious naturally occurring diseases, there has been little improvement in the medical treatments available for bioterrorist attacks. Many countermeasures for potential agents of terrorism, including smallpox, anthrax, botulinum toxin, ebola and the plague, realistically have no market other than the government and thus have not generated significant manufacturer interest. Insufficient financial incentives give drug companies little reason to invest in the development of treatments for these deadly diseases. However, should the United States be attacked with these deadly pathogens, the need for vaccines and antitoxins would be great and immediate.

In response, Congress passed the “Project BioShield Act of 2004,” which gives the federal government the tools to develop and purchase vaccines, drugs, and other countermeasures to protect Americans in the event of a bioterrorist attack. Project BioShield provides the Secretary of Health and Human Services (HHS) with an array of flexible acquisition tools – based on existing streamlined procedures – to promote research, development, and procurement of the necessary drugs and vaccines. **Now that HHS has begun to utilize its special authorities, it is time to consider whether Project BioShield is being adequately implemented and if medical countermeasures to protect our population against a biological attack are being procured. There are some concerns that HHS is moving too slowly to award contracts and has made insufficient efforts to**

**stockpile existing countermeasures while new and improved ones are being developed.**

The threat of bioterrorism emphasizes the need for planning and practice, and the federal government must prepare itself by partnering with industry to research, develop, produce, and stockpile sufficient countermeasures so that appropriate treatments can be administered in the event of a bioterrorist attack. This hearing will seek to identify and discuss any potential concerns regarding the utilization of BioShield funds, and the execution of its related authorities. The hearing will also facilitate discussion on whether the procurement of medical countermeasures to date has been sufficient and how best to work towards the improvements necessary for even greater preparedness.

**Witnesses:**

**Panel I**

**Mr. Stewart Simonson**, Assistant Secretary for Public Health Emergency Preparedness, Department of Health and Human Services

**Dr. Anthony S. Fauci**, Director, National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, National Institutes of Health, Department of Health and Human Services

**Dr. John Vitko**, Director, Biological Countermeasures Portfolio, Science, and Technology Directorate, Department of Homeland Security

**Panel II**

**Robert G. Kramer**, CEO, BioPort Corporation

**Richard B. Hollis**, CEO, Hollis-Eden Pharmaceuticals

**Gerald L. Epstein**, Senior Fellow for Science and Security, Homeland Security Program, Center for Strategic and International Studies

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